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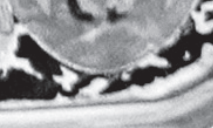
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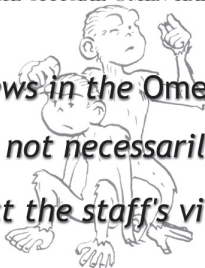
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THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:

Views in the Omen (5)

Do not necessarily (7)

Reflect the staff's views (5)



to submit

Submissions are due Saturdays before 5 p.m. You can submit in rich text or plain text format by CD, and typed hard copies will also be accepted, reluctantly. Label your disks well and they will get back to you. Get your stuff to Jacob Lefton, Merrill B307, x4371. You may also use e-mail. Send e-mail submissions to jwl04@hampshire.edu

And be sure to read our policy box at the bottom of the next page before submitting.

Visit the Omen's barely updated website! omen.hampshire.edu

"In my head I had an argument with myself. That was kind of funny!"

- Flarnie Nonemaker

BEGINNINGS, OR WHY IT'S NATURAL TO HATE YOURSELF

Editorial

by Jacob Lefton, Editor-in-Chief

Today marks the first day of the rest of my life—because now I will go down in Hampshire College history as a former Editor for the *Omen*. Here's to hoping that during my reign I carry on with tradition and there will be some juicy controversies that only future Omenites will really care about. Abby has already passed down one legacy to me, and that's writing the editorial at the last possible second.

Speaking of Abby, take a moment of silence and reflect on that proud daughter of Hampshire College. As you read these words, she is off fighting your battles in the halls of (real) academia. Next time you drink, remember a toast for her as she shows Harvard what a *real* academic snob looks like. (In this case, only yay high, dark hair, glasses.)

This semester, the *Omen* will have a good harvest of ripe submissions. How do I know? Well, while all of you are wallowing in poor self-esteem, you will be outputting lots of angst-ridden poetry and bad fiction. You will be ranting and raving about how much life sucks, how much this school sucks, how much your hall sucks. Nothing will be spared.

How do I know this? Well, consider the image

in the middle of the page and apply some basic math to it. Keep in mind the axiom that says the internet never lies. Simply as possible, facebook is telling you that you cannot love yourself. No self-love.

Zero self-love equals zero self esteem. It's simple mathematics! You don't even have to be an NS student to understand that. Even if you decide to ignore the laws of nature and be happy, you should probably submit to the *Omen*, just so the Emo Police don't catch you!

On a more serious note, many people complain about the *Omen* being a piece of junk pamphlet. I want to remind you that the *Omen* is an open-submission magazine, and the quality of this publication represents the quality of the discourse in the community. The community is you the readers, a representative chunk of Hampshire College.

The quality of the *Omen* is in your hands. If there's a particular thing you'd like to read, you can bring it to popularity by submitting it. We're proud to print it.

Send your submissions, whatever tone they take (excepting libelous ones, of course), to jwl04@hampshire.edu, box 0953, or bring them to Merrill B307. If we receive it before layout (7PM in the Merrill Basement, every other Saturday), it will be printed in that issue. Your contributions will be greatly appreciated.



policy

The *Omen* is Hampshire's longest-running bi-weekly publication, established by Stephanie Cole in December of 1992. In the past, submissions have included students' perspectives on the campus, administration, news, movie reviews, commentary, short fiction, satire, first born, artwork, comics, and the occasional embarrassing self-promotion. Everything the *Omen* receives, provided it is sent from a member of the Hampshire community, will be published unless it is deemed libelous or defamatory. Although we find such things amusing and entertaining for countless hours, it is just not an option in this forum. Libel will be considered clearly false or unsupportable writing that maliciously damages a person's reputation.

The *Omen* will not edit anything you write

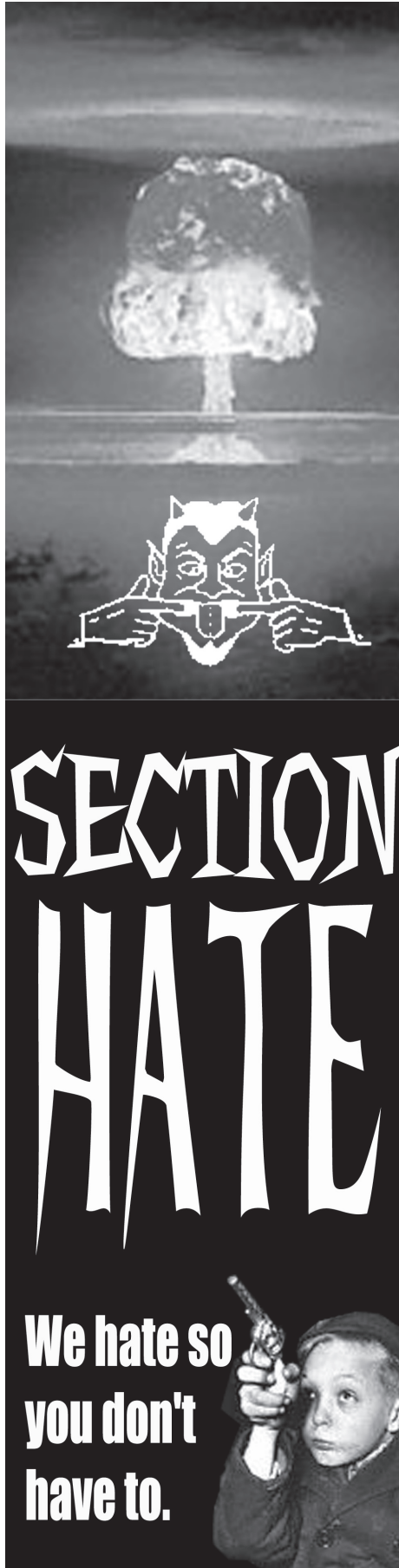
(except spelling and grammar).

You must sign your real name (no anonymous submissions) and understand that you are responsible for what you say. Nonetheless, views in the *Omen* do not necessarily represent the views of anyone, anywhere, living or dead.

There is no *Omen* staff, save those positions of editor-in-chief and layout editor. To qualify for community service you must be a consistent contributor and help regularly with layout. Layout times (and such) will be discussed at our meetings. Meetings are held every Tuesday after release of an issue in the Leadership Center at 6PM. Everyone, everywhere, living or dead, should come.

The *Omen* loves you.





Students of the Transparency Persuasion Demands

TO: GREG PRINCE

6 May 1992

President

Hampshire College

FROM: STUDENTS OF THE TRANSPARENCY PERSUASION

Hampshire College

We the students of transparency of Hampshire college have decided to take-over every bathroom at Hampshire so that issues of the unseen here, at this campus, will be take seriously. We will be occupying every bathroom stall and impeding your waste removal process with our transparent presence until there is an agreement reached between the students and the administration. Therefore we demand the following:

- 1 Hire some damn coordinators so the students of transparency on this campus can find each other. lord knows we can't see each other well enough to coordinate ourselves.
- 2 We want space. Dakin will suffice, if we get Merrill Basement as well.
- 3 We demand with every bit of audacity that we can mister more studies of significant accomplishments of the transparent people. Please overhaul your entire curriculum.
- 4 We haven't seen one transparent faculty member festooning the ranks of this 'Equal Opportunity' establishment. Fix that.
- 5 Give us more money so we can do some ore of the neat things you've seen us doing all year. You did see us, right?
- 6 There must be mandatory transparency training for all Hampshire faculty and staff. And, yeah, you have to be nicer to us or we will take action.

- 7 Create a transparency rights board. So our lives won't be the constant struggle against oppression that they are today.
- 8 Just because you can't see us doesn't mean you can't talk to us, you know.
- 9 Ban every holiday, ever. Use all the spare holiday space to teach people about all the things they never see because they've got their heads in some sort of hippy-join-the-struggle-isn't-it-groovy idealistic wasteland.
- 10 Reevaluate everything. The world is skewed and imperfect. It shouldn't be that way, what do you think we are, human?
- 11 That the students who have participated in this take-over be given reasonable extensions for completing coursework that would have been late anyway. We also demand that no disciplinary action be taken against any student involvend in the takeover.
- 12 And everybody better agree with us, or we won't look nearly as cool as people at successful protests look.

This we found in the Hampshire College history archives. They're really amazing, and really fascinating! It's very interesting to read about how Hampshire has changed over the years and what students have accomplished. You should check them out! <http://library.hampshire.edu/archives/index.html>





Project Courses in the First Year

by Donald Jackson

I developed this idea in response to last year's effort to reform the first-year plan, itself part of a long history of adjusting and tweaking the Hampshire model. Last year some discussion focused around recruiting large pools of TAs for first-year project courses. This proved difficult. I worked on the idea below as a way of addressing this difficulty. I think the proposed structure would also create an interesting "experiment" in elaborating and the concept of "independent learning" that drives so many students to Hampshire.

I graduated last year and worked at Hampshire during the summer, so it was fresh in my mind a few months ago. I wanted to throw this out to the community before it faded, just in case anyone was interested.

If you like this idea and want to talk about it, my email is bakunin661@gmail.com, or my alumni email is dej99@hampshire.edu. Thanks for your time, I hope this proves provocative.

"Project Courses in the First-year"

Discussion last year of integrating project courses into the first-year was promising. Such a development would be of great use in Hampshire's development as a distinctive college. The recent proposal rested upon two faculty supported by eight to ten student TAs. The TAs would assist the students directly with independent studies.

Certain flaws in this idea became quickly apparent. Unambiguously, there was a lack of student and faculty interest in this program. I think a few basic changes in this idea might improve its reception.

It seems that a sound first year program must address certain expectations that have become voiced over the years:

- *tangible distinction from the first-year programs common at other colleges

- *some unifying experience for first-

years that introduces them to "Hampshire values"; at the same time this should not be specious rhetoric and the values must be clearly expressed so that any participating or potential students can "get the point", there must be a clear narrative that expresses a simple set of pedagogical values

- *distribution requirements must be met

- *something akin to an "independent project" must be maintained or reconceived, to maintain Hampshire's basic niche marketability; this must be more than a focus on large final papers in courses of the student's chosen topic, because this does not offer enough in the way of structural distinction from other liberal arts schools, and more to the point, it is not necessarily appealing to a large enough niche market

- *students must be exposed to inquiry-based learning

- *students should optimally integrate their learning with some practical application or effort

- *this program should enhance the "radical" quality of Hampshire education, perhaps exposing students to the political ramifications of the content of their work

- *this program should develop an idea of "independent learning" that does not detract from sociability, does not isolate students, and enhances the connections between civic life and academic community

- *this program cannot increase faculty workload

The final criterion I have always considered the most limiting. Though it is of course understandable, it always creates the greatest impediment to pursuing "independent studies" as traditionally understood. We can either throw up our hands then or we can try and reconsider what is most significant in the idea of "independent projects." This was never really made clear during the discussions that led to the elimination of Division

I projects, as all parties seemed to have different focuses. One distinct strand felt rested upon the traditional definition, of close supervised work between a faculty member and an individual student. The advantage of an independent project, then, would be the advantage found in a strong student-tutor relationship. Many faculty hold this view, and many students, desirous of the getting the most out of their financial investment in college, also put this forward as an ideal.

I do not wish to condemn this desire, and indeed we might benefit from greater institutionalization of this path during the DivI and DivII process. However, given the constraints of Hampshire's finances, even in the best of foreseeable circumstances, it will not be possible to use this ideal to shape a functional mass program for the college. Even when it operated, it worked sparingly or haphazardly for students, with wide differentials in quality of work. There is something to be said for allowing a robust level of failure and success in students, and throwing them headfirst into a chaotic structure to see what they may produce given diffuse institutional supports. However, there does not seem to be support of this among most faculty or students anymore, so any new program would have to function more smoothly than previous programs and more creatively than the current system. This means we cannot simply use the traditional independent study principle as an ideal and hope that half-measures towards its fulfillment will suffice. We must refocus our intentions.

What else may we focus on? It seems that most faculty are resigned to any work being done through and within the classroom, to maintain regularity in their work. This poses a second major parameter on the first year. This also precludes an understanding of independent projects that locates the meaning of "independence" in an out-

of-class experience specifically, at least as it pertains to a large-scale first year program.

So, we may outline the task like this:

Question: how can we build some form of “independent projects” into the first year in a way that is clearly different from other institutions and enhances the radical tendencies of Hampshire’s pedagogy?

Parameters: don’t increase faculty workload; keep it inside classes; make it smooth and functional, challenging yet satisfying for students.

Lingering concerns: how can this be done so that it enhances community and collaboration among students? How can this be done so that it encourages creativity, a mixture of study and action, etc.

I propose the following experiment in course structure to address these expectations:

First year project courses:

First year project courses should be composed of two faculty, 8-10 TAs (receiving TA credit), and 30 first year students.

Instead of simply selecting student TAs through open application, appropriate student groups on campus will be given the responsibility of providing TA labor to a course. The individual students will receive TA credit.

Faculty will get a fairly secure pool for TA labor to assist students with independent work.

The first-year program is enhanced by the creation of a radically distinct method of course organization, that integrates campus civic and academic life fluidly in a way that empowers student groups/collectives.

The student groups/collectives reap substantial benefits, equivalent in scope

to the benefits offered to faculty or first-year students.

- this would give the groups secure access to a large pool of first year students for the purposes of potential recruitment

- this would offer appropriate student groups a means of achieving a stability lost in the normal academic cycle of a college; the groups would always have work to do, the work would always be given academic legitimacy, and it would not be short-changed in favor of evaluated work in the latter half of semesters (as is currently the case)

- working with faculty and utilizing academic mechanisms will give student groups greater stability and enhance the rigor of their civic work

- because they are bargaining with faculty to provide TA labor, this could get them valuable life experience in negotiation with employers for co-management of “the workplace”- in this case, TAs and faculty could develop course requirements or syllabi in dialogue, bringing together academic expectations of faculty with the practical needs of student civic groups; this has additional impact in terms of the integration of practical and academic knowledge

- students doing independent projects in the project courses, aided by TAs supplied by student groups, may do standard academic work, for instance an extended paper, for their requirement. They may do their work individually. However, they may also choose to work on projects the student group is undertaking, and do so with a rigor or reflective analysis that fulfills course requirements. They may work on these projects individually or collectively.

An example: Hampshire currently has several groups concerned with class and labor issues. The most institutionalized at the moment is Students for the Freedom to Unionize. In addition, a Work Study

Forum (essentially the first steps towards a “union” for work-study students) has begun as an off-shoot of SFU.

We could see, then, a first-year course in F’06 based around labor and working class cultural studies, co-taught by two to three faculty. These two student groups, perhaps in some combination with other appropriate groups, would contract to provide 8-10 students as TAs for the course. These TAs would help the students do independent projects. Some of these projects would be academic in the traditional sense.

However, I believe that many students would choose to do collective projects working on some campaign or effort, and submitting work that reads their academic work in light of their campaign experience. For instance, a group of students could choose to work for a labor rights campaign in the Valley, helping union organizers. A group could help organize conferences under the Umass Labor Center and submit substantial work on the process, the disagreements and agreements among presenters, the current state of American unionism, etc. The faculty would oversee the work and write the final evaluations of course, but this should be expedited by the help of TAs.

This model would then present us with a provocative new idea of what “independent project” means. Rather than simply saying it is a project undertaken outside the classroom, it is instead work provoked by a practical necessity outside the classroom, and organized around (though not instrumentally determined by) that provocation from the outside. Such a model displaces the necessity of singular faculty-student interaction (that Hampshire cannot afford to provide for all entering students effectively) and instead focuses attention on the source of inspiration for work, and building institutional support for working through that inspiration into a responsible academic project. This means that work could be undertaken by

individuals or collectives, yet still count as “independent”, though we might better call it “interdependent.”

This model seems most appropriate to work in politics and political movements, community development, and social sciences. Indeed, I hope that this feature will be most seductive for individual faculty, who may work with groups of students around projects of explicit political empowerment. However, I think this structure offers strong possibilities for each of the five Schools and many different fields. In CS, the students involved in the Culture, Brain, and development program have already formed their own student group autonomously from faculty direction (though with clear faculty support and encouragement after-the-fact). In NS, groups are forming to advocate for sustainable design initiatives on campus. Students involved in the Farm Center and Sustainable Technology/Agriculture programs also have strong internal communities and various student groups. The humanities present themselves with many possible groups and overlaps. Finally, social sciences may focus on a variety of political issues. I have already mentioned class and labor groups. We also have women’s and abortion rights groups who might be interested, groups focused on community economic and social development (CPSC), etc.

Other Considerations:

*some student group leaders have expressed hesitance in tying their civic work with their schoolwork. This is unavoidable, some students will find this advantageous, some students will prefer maintaining distance. It might be worth considering, though, how this program could be arranged so that certain problems that might dissuade student groups from participating will be minimized. For instance, individual students may not want their civic work to be tied into an evaluation or divisional requirement. This might be addressed most easily by focusing on labor contracts through student groups, not through individual students primarily.

For instance, SFU could agree to provide three TAs, meaning no one in that group need necessarily work as a TA for credit. We might also simply allow some students (in excess of the minimum necessary) to work with first-year students voluntarily. Finally, we might need some way for students working as TAs to be feel some autonomy from the evaluative process.

*this will need coordination with Community Council. However, this should be simple enough, assuming its satisfaction with this plan. We might need some boon to offer them, or some type of influence, perhaps in coordinating this as a larger policy with EPC, or giving them rights to suggest appropriate students groups already being funded by Council. Council will especially need satisfaction in regards to a coherent policy on funding matters- student groups in this scenario could quite conceivably provide financial support for collective projects of benefit to the community, and they should. There must simply be consistent policy in this regard.

*implementation: This should not be adopted without prior experimentation. At the same time, limited experiments with something of this nature might be inappropriate and might generate too little interest (especially when we’d need fresh crops of first years for each course). I would suggest beginning at least one of these courses in each School, and advertising these to prospective students. If they are successful, full implementation could be smooth and progressive, perhaps requiring only that some campus organization or staff member take on this coordinating role as a function. In the future, each School could handle their faculty end independently, and Community Council in concert with Student Affairs might take on responsibility for coordinating student group participation.

*proper advertising of the “independent” nature of project courses would require that individual course structure, in terms of the allocation

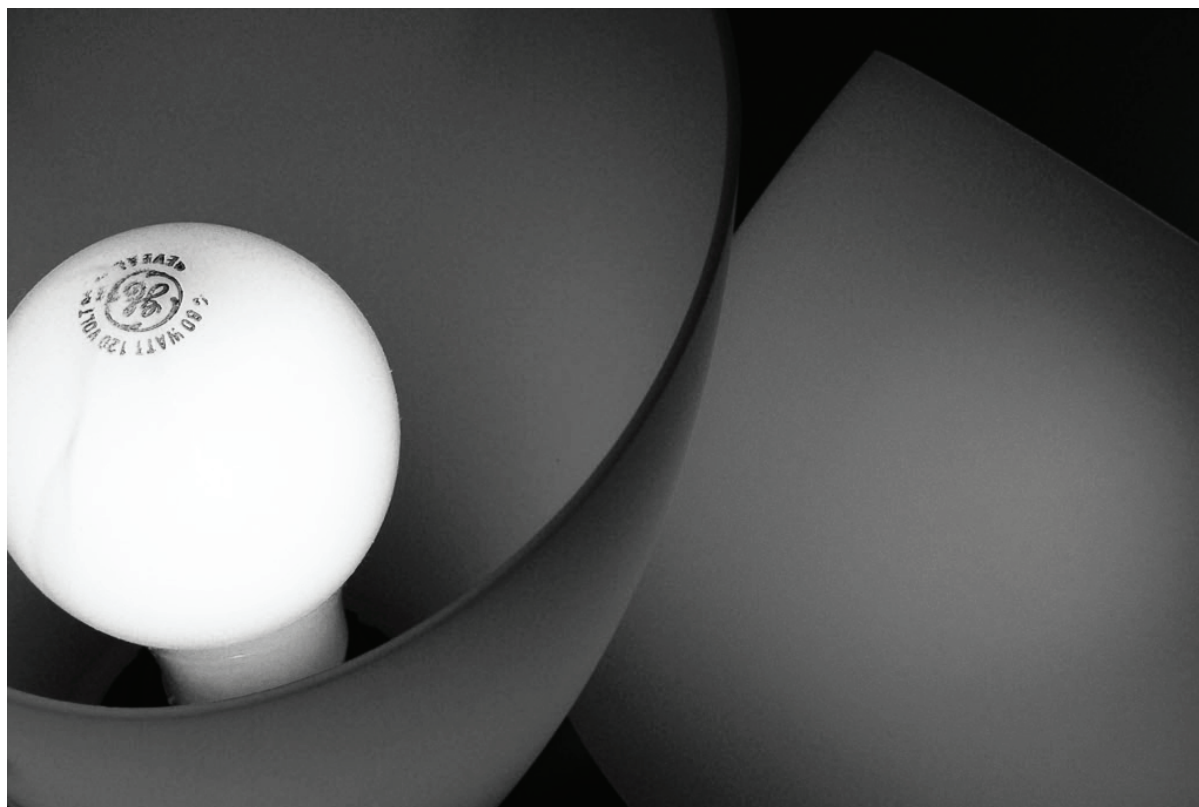
of course time, display clear time for independent work. this could most easily be accomplished by having a course that meets two to three times a week, with one course period devoted entirely to work on projects guided by TAs. Making TAs keep roll would insure participation in project course sessions by students. It would also be prudent, I think, for project courses to allow a maximum in flexibility for students in finishing their work. We also shouldn’t load this in the first semester; courses should be evenly divided between semesters if possible. They might even work best in the second semester. In either case, owing to the provisional nature of work provoked by outside necessity, students should be allowed leeway.

*quality control: Currently, few of Hampshire’s student groups have the sort of purview that would sync up well with academic fields. The student collectives also tend towards looseness in structure and function. This might make this proposal seem impractical. However, I only wish to emphasize, this is intended to establish both stronger student groups and interesting project courses. I anticipate that initially, only a few student groups will have the interest and cohesion to participate in this program, leading to only a few pilot courses. However, I also anticipate that these initial pilots will encourage other student groups and students forming new groups to keeping a mind to this program, strengthening their student collectives accordingly.

At many schools, student groups are required to have faculty sponsors, providing a high degree of oversight and institutional support. I don’t suggest that for Hampshire, but this could be a provocative experiment for achieving a high level of institutional support while empowering students instead of restricting their work. It also allows faculty to attempt something fairly radical yet practical in pedagogy.



Photos by Kelsey Freeman



Glow



Frozen

Famous Febs!



Ayn Rand was born Alisa Rosenbaum on February 3, 1905 in St. Petersburg, Russia. She bore first witness to the realism of Leftist ideology's idealism while a child in Communist Russia before moving to the USA at 26 years old. She went on to write "Atlas Shrugged" which was later

named the second most influential book for Americans following the Bible. All of her works share the theme of the struggle for individuality and true liberalism against collectivist conformity and oppression. Despite her many contributions to modern philosophy, she is still treated as a pariah by self-described "postmodernists", including most academic feminists. Her work continues to have a grass-roots following and popularize Objectivism and free market economics to this day, while still banned in most Leftist countries. *Ayn Rand is indeed a Fabulous Feb!*

This section is dedicated to those students who entered Hampshire College this February. The OMEN understands how difficult it can be coming into a new place and trying to make friends after social groups have already formed. After all, the OMEN was a Feb!

To you Febs, we give this article with hopes that you will realize your true potential because of your unique position in our society.

Blackbeard the pirate was born around 1680 as Edward Thatch. Blackbeard was renowned for his ferocity in combat with nearly any weapon, as well as his habit of weaving hemp and matches into his beard during battle (and his 6'4" frame certainly helped). He



preyed on merchant ships in the West Indies as well as the Eastern Coast of North America, and was said to have amassed quite a fortune, much of which he buried across America. He was finally killed in 1718 in a climactic battle with Robert Maynard of the British Royal Navy, in which he fought until he had been shot five times and stabbed nearly twenty. *Blackbeard the pirate was a Feb!*



William Henry Cosby, Jr. was born July 12, 1937 in Philadelphia. He began his career as a stand up comic, and worked in television for a number of years before starring in his own sitcom in the eighties, The Cosby Show. The Cosby Show was a huge hit, and Bill Cosby moved on to other starring roles in great

venues such as Jell-O commercials. He won a number of Grammy's for his comedy albums, and also has written a number of books that were generally received well. Even in old age, Bill Cosby has continued to entertain America with his unique blend of family friendly humor and his consistent exasperation at today's children. *Bill Cosby was a Feb!*



Mary, the mother of Jesus, was born sometime around 17 B.C. She conceived a child while still a virgin, and the angel Gabriel came to her and let her know it was in fact the son of God she was carrying! She birthed the child in a manger on December 25th 0 B.C., and named him Jesus. Her son

went on to become the most influential prophet of all time, and Mary became one of the focal points for the Catholic religion, one of the largest and most influential religious institutions. *Mary was a Feb!*



1 Blank White Cards

by: Stephen Morton

Games night is fun. If you don't already know, it's the new program run by Excalibur, and it's been running since the beginning of Jan term. It meets every Wednesday in Merrill Living Room, starting at 6:30 and ending whenever no one's there anymore. There's very good mulled cider, and cider doughnuts, if you're there early enough. Yum.

The format is as expected. People come, and play games. People bring games of their own to play. There's usually traditional card games going on, board games of different types, and the game I'm here to tell you about now, 1000 Blank White Cards, which doesn't fit into either of those categories.

It's a game that I first heard about a long time ago, and have wanted to play since then. The game involves not 1000, but between 60 and 90 blank cards. Many of these are passed out to the players at the beginning, to be filled in. Others are left blank, and filled in later. Because it's a continuing game, it also involves a number of cards from the last game. More on that later.

A card goes like this: At the top is the title. Under that is an illustration, drawing ability not required. At the bottom, is the important part: what it does. It can grant or take away points, require an action, or anything else you can think of, in any combination you can think of. For example, see the picture on the right.



We've got cards as diverse as "Surprise hug person of your choice" and "You can fly! No you can't. But you have to try."

During game play, everyone has a hand of some number of cards. When it gets to your turn, you can play a card on any player, including yourself, or on every player. This determines who the effect applies to. If you've got a

blank card in your hand, you get to fill it in before you play it. The turn rotates around the group of players until no cards are left. Whoever has the most points at the end wins! Hooray!

Except, the points don't really matter, and could go anywhere. They matter less than the points on Who's Line is it Anyway. Most of our cards don't have points

There's an after game process, however. As a group, the players go through all the cards that were used in that game, and decide which ones to keep for the next time. Whoever made the most cards that get kept is the real winner.

As you can imagine, the game is chaotic, and often requires actions that make no sense. The point is not to be cohesive, the point is to have fun, do silly things, and make silly little drawings.

I introduced this game at the second games night, and it was met with skepticism. Most people are skeptical of the game at first. After they see it played, this disappears. The game is a lot of silly fun. If you were there last week, you would have seen everyone playing being required to ride someone else like a pony, surprise hugs going off to people playing other games, and many other wonderful things.

You, whoever you are, should come and play games. Wednesday at 6:30. If chaotic nonsense isn't your thing, there's always all the other games going on.



"Dave, what are 'Third Reich Points'?"

"You're not cleared for that information."

"Well, how many do I get?"

"You're not cleared for that information."



Almost Ideal: A Dialogue Concerning the Nature of Just About Everything

Section Three: Of Hobbes, Hume, and Humanity

The Tenth Dialogue

In which Xavier and Phillip further elaborate on the concept of God.

XAVIER: It now remains for us to examine this conceptual God in order to determine if there is anything else knowable about His nature.

PHILLIP: That necessarily seems the next step.

XAVIER: First off, we have determined that God is in fact self-caused; it follows from that that the existence of the self and of the self's sensations is in no way necessary for God.

PHILLIP: That seems to be part of what we have concluded.

XAVIER: We have to ask then why it is that God causes the existence of the self and its sensations.

PHILLIP: This seems to be a paradox, for if God is self-caused and has the power to cause the self and its perceptions, then there doesn't seem to be any possible benefit that the self could render unto God. The existence of the self seems entirely superfluous.

XAVIER: If God can gain no benefit from the existence of the self, and yet causes it anyway, it follows that the only possible reason for God to cause the self is out of an altruistic concern for it; that is to say, God causes the self to exist for its own sake. It then must necessarily be the case then that part of the nature of God is altruistic love.

PHILLIP: Prima facie, that does seem the case; however, I feel that you have unknowingly skipped a step in reaching this conclusion.

XAVIER: What might that be?

PHILLIP: In attributing altruism to God, you have also unknowingly attributed beliefs and desires to Him; in short, you thought of Him not as the uncaused-cause we have postulated but as a personal God. This leap, however, is not necessary. Why could God not be merely a blind causational force?

XAVIER: It seems that if God were a blind causational force, then He would be more or less like the materialist conception of matter; that is to say, unthinking, unperceiving substance that somehow gives rise to thought and perceptions.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: We have already seen though that such a thing is impossible. If God is something unthinking and unperceiving, then one must explain how thought and perception arose.

PHILLIP: It is true that we were unable to do that.

XAVIER: Furthermore, God as a blind causational force is a concept that only works with materialism, which we have already ruled out as a possibility; it is incompatible with the metaphysics that we have developed.

PHILLIP: Why is that?

XAVIER: We have determined that God is the cause of the self and its perceptions; does it not follow from that that God, as the cause of the self's perceptions, is necessarily aware of those perceptions and their nature?

PHILLIP: That follows.

XAVIER: Furthermore, if we are to continue to conceive of external objects – such as tree of which we spoke – in any sense at all, then we must postulate that all that constitutes what we normally think of as the external world – that is, “objective reality” – exists in some sense as “potential perceptions,” even when they are not being perceived by the self. Since perceptions cannot exist unperceived, they must be perceptions of God even when they are not perceptions of the self.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: It is absurd, then, to speak of God as being unthinking or unperceiving, since His perceptions encompass at minimum all perceptions that are possible. As beliefs and desires are perceptions, then God must necessarily have them. Furthermore, as God is the sole cause of perceptions, then it follows that He might have other perceptions that are not possible perceptions of the self (that is to say, components of the world the self perceives).

PHILLIP: That does seem it must be the case; we must conclude then that God must have beliefs and desires at least on the level of those of the self. As that is the case, then your original conclusion that part of the nature of God is altruistic love holds.

The Eleventh Dialogue

In which Xavier and Phillip discuss the concept of Altruism.

XAVIER: Due, then, to the vagueness of language, I feel that it is necessary

for us to define altruism precisely and unambiguously before we continue.

PHILLIP: That seems wise.

XAVIER: Altruism, then, is the performance of, or predisposition to perform, any action because so doing will benefit someone else.

PHILLIP: That seems a sufficient explanation, and it fits that which we said about the nature of God.

XAVIER: It strikes me then that we have come to the limits of what can be known with certainty.

PHILLIP: It seems that we in fact have; should we not now continue on to examine what the consequences of our conclusions might be?

XAVIER: That seems the next logical step. Given what we have determined with certainty, we might now be justified in making certain inferences that we otherwise might not.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: To begin; would we not be justified in saying that, since God causes the existence of the self and determines its perceptions, He is omnipotent in that He could cause said perceptions to be just about anything?

PHILLIP: That seems to follow.

XAVIER: Does it not also follow that, since God can gain no benefit from our existence in principle, His altruism is perfect?

PHILLIP: I'm afraid I don't fully understand.

XAVIER: Let me clarify then; whenever a person does something that seems altruistic – giving money to a charity for instance – there is almost always some sort of real or perceived self benefit.

The person might look better in the eyes of others, or hope for some sort of reward in heaven, or merely feel better about himself. Because of this, it is never certain whether a person does something out of altruism or out of concern for self – that is, egoism –, or out a mix of the two.

PHILLIP: That's true.

XAVIER: In the case of God there can be no self-benefit, so His altruism must necessarily be perfect; that is, untouched by egoism.

PHILLIP: That does follow.

XAVIER: Also, does it not seem that altruism requires empathy; that is, the ability to understand what another's perceptions are like, or are likely like, to the degree that in some sense you share those perceptions?

PHILLIP: It seems that if one was unable to do that, then altruism would be impossible; if you were unable to understand happiness or the lack thereof in others you would be unable to want them to be happy.

□ **XAVIER:** This, then, is further evidence that God's altruism is perfect; as God is the cause of perceptions, it follows that His understanding of those perceptions and ability to experience them is perfect.

PHILLIP: That follows as well.

XAVIER: Given what we know about God then, does it seem to you that there could be any higher goal or purpose than to duplicate that altruism? For what more could the self strive for than to be like God?

PHILLIP: It strikes me that perhaps this doesn't follow, for could it not be that what is good for the self has nothing to do with being godlike? Perhaps, although God is altruistic, the pursuit of self-interest is the natural goal of the self.

XAVIER: It seems like that might be the case, as it is true that people seem to have a natural tendency to pursue whatever seems best to them. However, our interest here concerns what one *should* do, that is to say, what it is good to do. In order to determine that, we must first have a conception of what it is that makes something good.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: As we have determined that both the existence of the self and all conceivable experiences and perceptions are the product of God, then it follows that whatever it is that good is, it is dependant upon God like all else that the self can experience and conceive of. As God is altruistic, then it follows that altruism is good.

PHILLIP: Perfect altruism then might very well be the ultimate goal of the self; there remain, however, some doubts in my mind regarding the feasibility of such a proposition.

XAVIER: Do not withhold them then, but state them as strongly as you can so that we might address them.

PHILLIP: First of all, it strikes me that we have not yet determined the existence of other selves, which seems to be necessary in order for there to be altruism. Secondly, what you said previously regarding the inability of determining whether someone is acting altruistically or egoistically seems true; in light of that, it seems to me that people might never act altruistically, and might in fact be incapable of doing so. Last of all, it seems to me that there might in fact be actions done out of altruism that are in fact immoral, or at least not noble or desirable.

XAVIER: These are strong attacks, and I feel that we should address each of them separately and in turn, beginning with the first. Since God is capable

of the causation of the self and its sensations, does it not follow that He is also capable of causing other selves and their sensations as well?

PHILLIP: It seems likely, and there is no reason to think otherwise.

XAVIER: Then, granting that, does it not follow that He would cause other selves out of the same altruism out of which he causes the one that is knowable?

PHILLIP: It seems that He would, but that is not knowable for certain.

XAVIER: Granted, that is true, but proof or true knowledge does not seem possible in this case; likelihood then is the best we can hope for.

PHILLIP: Even if one grants though that there are likely other selves, it does not necessarily follow that they are the same as those that the sensory experiences of the self seem to indicate the existence of.

XAVIER: I'm afraid that I don't fully grasp your point. Please clarify.

PHILLIP: Let us return to the example most present; that of the two of us here in this parking lot. Just because there are or are likely other selves, it does not necessarily follow (from my point of view) that you are one of them. There could very well be innumerable selves that never have any sort of contact with one another. You might still exist only in my perceptions of you.

XAVIER: This is a frightening possibility which I am regrettably forced to acknowledge. We must now examine whether or not it seems likely given what we already know. Does this in fact seem like something that an altruistic God would do?

PHILLIP: It certainly doesn't seem like it. The nature of my sensations is such that it certainly seems that there

are other people; it seems to me that an altruistic God would not deceive me about something like this.

XAVIER: That is true, unless it were the case that doing so was for some reason better for the self.

PHILLIP: We have no reason though to think that this is the case – on the contrary, a deception of this sort would seem quite malicious.

XAVIER: That does seem the case. We now must address the second of the concerns that you brought up; that is, that altruism might not in fact exist. Let us first confirm our original assertion that for any seemingly altruistic action, there is an egoistic explanation. I propose the following example: A man is walking to a neighborhood deli, but stops upon seeing a homeless man begging for a handout. Moved by pity, the man buys the homeless man lunch. Does there seem to be an egoistic explanation of this action?

PHILLIP: One could argue that the man, moved to pity, acted either to make himself feel better (or prevent himself from feeling bad), or because was hoping for some sort of heavenly reward, or even just to make himself look better to other people.

XAVIER: That is undoubtedly a possible explanation. Consider, then, this example: Jane, an atheist, sells all of her belongings and anonymously donates the money to a charity. She then spends the rest of her life working at a job she hates, giving all of her earnings to charities. She is never informed about the good that her money is doing for other people.

PHILLIP: one could still say that she is just doing it because it makes her feel good about herself. The fact that she persists in her lifestyle indicates that it must benefit her in some way. She might be the happiest person alive.

XAVIER: That too is possible. I offer then this final example: George is an atheist who believes that death marks the end of all conscious experience, and is therefore the greatest of all evils. He nevertheless decides to give up his life in exchange for the life of a complete stranger because he knows that the other person will have a much longer and happier life than he would if he were to continue living.

PHILLIP: This seems that it must be altruistic, but one could still say that on some unconscious level he preferred death to living the rest of his life feeling guilty and/or waiting for and dreading his inevitable death.

XAVIER: We have confirmed our original statement then. What remains to be examined is whether or not this really presents a challenge to altruism. In all of these cases, does it not seem that the perceived cost to the agent would seem to that person far greater than whatever personal benefit there might be?

PHILLIP: In all these cases, the perceived cost is far greater than whatever perceived benefits there might be.

XAVIER: Does it not follow from this that the truly egoistic person would not act in this way then, even though there might still be some benefit to doing so?

PHILLIP: It seems that if people acted only out of egoism, then they would do things that seem to be altruistic sometimes, but only when the benefit to themselves outweigh the costs. People regularly perform actions in which this seems like it could not be the case.

XAVIER: Could it then be the case that, although there is some benefit to performing an altruistic action, a person performs that action not because of the benefit, but out of genuine altruism?

PHILLIP: It seems that this does in fact happen.

XAVIER: Could it not also be the case that for any given action, it need not be either altruistic or egoistic, but is instead some combination of the two?

PHILLIP: That seems not only possible, but probable as well.

XAVIER: It seems then that there is no particular evidence to support the claim of egoism, and plenty of evidence that seems to contradict it (as much as empirical evidence can). Barring an as yet undevised in-principle argument that shows egoism as being necessarily true, we must regard it as an empirical claim which, if true, would be supported by any existing empirical evidence.

The Twelfth Dialogue

In which Xavier and Phillip examine the desirability of Altruism in relation to other Metaethical Theories.

PHILLIP: There seems to be no reason to think then that altruism is in fact impossible. We now must examine finally whether or not it is necessarily a good thing. Consider the following hypothetical: A man robs several banks, killing multiple people in the process. He manages to bury the money he stole in a deserted spot before he is captured and executed. Later on, his family digs up the money and they all live like kings. Assume, for the sake of the example, that we know that the only motive for the man's actions was altruistic concern for his family's well being. Is this not a case where altruism is undesirable?

XAVIER: It is true that in this case it seems that altruism is undesirable, but before we examine that let us first look at why it is that it seems as such. What is it that makes it wrong for the man to act in the way that he does?

PHILLIP: There seem to be two possible answers to this question.

XAVIER: We should examine them

each in turn then.

PHILLIP: That seems best. The first answer would be to say that the sum total of harm done by the man's actions (murder, theft, destruction of property, loss of a loved one on the part of his family) outweighs the sum of all the benefits of his actions (financial gain by his family).

XAVIER: This seems to stem from a misunderstanding of what we propose, so let us clarify it. We said that the highest goal was the emulation of God's altruism, correct?

PHILLIP: That is correct.

XAVIER: God's altruism we determined is universal. It follows then that emulation of it would take the form of universal altruism. In the example you described, the person possessed and acted out of altruism, but it was directed at just his family. The problem then was not the possession of altruism, but the lack of it; had the man possessed universal altruism, he would have acted in whatever way would bestow the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people.

PHILLIP: That does seem the case. We shall proceed then to the second way in which the man's action might be considered wrong, which is to say that there is some objective law of morality that he has violated, either against stealing or against murder.

XAVIER: This accusation by itself seems to me unsatisfactory; in order to address it we shall first have to outline and examine the different reasons that there may be for such a law existing.

PHILLIP: That does seem necessary.

XAVIER: There seem to be three that people appeal to: First, a law could be simply declared dogmatically by God (never mind for the moment how), and be right or wrong by virtue of such.

Secondly, a law could be understood to be something that is simply inherent in the nature of the world. Thirdly, a law could be a part of some sort of social contract, by which people agree to all abide by certain rules of behavior, and to fail to do so is what is defined as wrong.

PHILLIP: That delineation seems sufficient.

XAVIER: Let us now examine them individually in order that we may determine whether their observance conflicts with, or could conflict with altruism. Let us begin with the second; does it not follow that since God causes and determines our perceptions, any law that is inherent in them is determined by Him as well?

PHILLIP: That does follow.

XAVIER: The first and second then are the same for our purposes, for they both originate from God. We must then ask whether God would command something that would conflict with universal altruism.

PHILLIP: An altruistic God would necessarily only give commands that reinforce (or are at least compatible with) altruism.

XAVIER: Next let us examine the reasons why one would comply with a divine command.

PHILLIP: It seems that in most cases those who follow what they take to be divine command do so out of either a desire to gain some sort of divine reward or else avoid punishment.

XAVIER: It seems that we are falling back into the egoist trap now. Let us inquire as to why God would give a command.

PHILLIP: It seems that an altruistic God would only give a command if in so doing He was making whoever the

command was to happier.

XAVIER: Does it not also follow then that if people disobey God's commands they will be less happy?

PHILLIP: It does. It strikes me though that if obeying the laws of Divine command will make one happy, then obeying them is egoistic.

XAVIER: That is only the case if obeying them could not always also be altruistic. If, as you said, most people only obey divine commands out of fear of divine punishment or hope for divine rewards, it seems then that most of what are considered divine commands, far from seeming beneficial, appear to people as burdensome. If obeying them then brings happiness, most people seem at least unaware of that; it is then entirely possible for someone to obey divine law without being aware that it will make him happy.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: Furthermore, even in cases where there is a recognized benefit to the self, the possibility still remains that the action is altruistic. Since God is altruistic, it follows by definition that He wants people to be happy. Is it not the case that when you want someone to be happy, and they are not, that you become less happy as a result?

PHILLIP: You do, because your desires are not met.

XAVIER: That is true, but you also become unhappy because the empathy that let you desire the other's happiness also lets you share in their unhappiness. As God's empathy is perfect, must he not also share perfectly in someone's unhappiness?

PHILLIP: It seems that He must, which means that one might act in a way that makes you happy out of altruistic concern for God. However, it also follows from

God having perfect empathy that God must share perfectly in one's happiness as well. This in turn calls into question whether He is truly altruistic or in fact egoistic.

XAVIER: Prima facie it does, but upon closer inspection you will find that you have fallen into the trap of egoism again; it does not follow that just because God shares in the happiness of those selves that He causes that that is the reason He causes them. On the contrary, it follows from the nature of God's self-causation that this happiness already exists within Him, and that He doesn't need us in order to be happy. Furthermore, we have established that the only reason that He is able to share in our happiness of lack thereof is because He is altruistic; if He were ambivalent, then the whole question is moot. That He does in fact risk sharing in our unhappiness by causing our existence anyways just reaffirms His altruism.

PHILLIP: Now that you've explained it, that does seem like it must be the case.

XAVIER: It follows from what we have said then that acting in accordance to Divine Command is always potentially altruistic, for even if no one is affected by the action except the agent, and he or she only positively, the action might still be performed out of altruistic concern for God.

PHILLIP: That is true. However, it still seems to me that there could be a Divine Command that's inconsistent with a commitment to universal altruism.

XAVIER: That cannot be, because we have already seen that a Divine Command must necessarily be for the benefit of those it is to.

PHILLIP: That does follow from what we have said.

XAVIER: It now remains for us to examine a social contract, which is when

there is an agreement among people to do or avoid doing certain things.

PHILLIP: It is very easy to imagine a social contract that conflicts with universal altruism; for instance, there could be ruler, installed under a social contract, who rules egoistically.

XAVIER: That is true, in which case the question is whether one should do what the leader says or act altruistically.

PHILLIP: That then becomes the question.

XAVIER: Perhaps we should begin by examining why people set up social contracts, and what the ideal social contracts would accomplish.

PHILLIP: That seems best. There appear to be two possible reasons for setting up a social contract: an egoistic reason and an altruistic reason. In the former case, an individual submits to the contract because he or she believes that by doing so there will be a greater self-benefit than by doing otherwise; in the latter case, the submission is based on a belief that doing so is the best thing for the greatest number of people.

XAVIER: That does seem to be the case. We should now examine if the ideal egoistic contract and the ideal altruistic contract would necessarily be different from one another.

PHILLIP: It seems that the ideal social contract for the egoistic person and the altruistic person would be one and the same; for the egoistic person would never submit to a contract unless the benefits outweighed the costs, and the contract that the altruistic person would advocate – that is, the contract that is most beneficial for the greatest number of people – would be the most likely to provide the greatest benefits for the egoist.

XAVIER: It follows then that social

contracts are predicated on the notion of encouraging altruism; the more effectively a social contract produces altruistic behavior, the better it is.

PHILLIP: That seems the case.

XAVIER: With that in mind, does it seem to you that if such a contract fails to produce such behavior (or, worse, encourages its opposite), a person who previously submitted to it still has an obligation to obey it?

PHILLIP: Anybody who submitted to it must have thought at the time that it would encourage altruistic behavior. If the contract subsequently failed to do that effectively, then whoever entered in upon it entered under false pretenses. A social contract, therefore, is only binding as far as it accomplishes its goal of encouraging altruistic behavior; if it encourages the opposite, then it is defunct and should be replaced by a more effective one.

XAVIER: From that then we have an answer to our inquiry, and can conclude that acting altruistically is always compatible with any legitimate moral rule. We can conclude then that in all cases and situations, altruistic behavior is the most desirable sort.

PHILLIP: It seems that it must be.

XAVIER: Tell me then – does it not seem that all acts are ultimately altruistic or egoistic, or is there some third sort of motivation?

PHILLIP: There are people who think that there is a moral motivation that is separate from either of these.

XAVIER: That is true – however, a moral motivation would necessarily imply that one was obeying a moral dictate purely because it is such, and that morality was then an end in itself.

PHILLIP: That would seem the case.

XAVIER: Yet, it seems to me upon reflection that all moral laws are ultimately founded upon concern for universal altruism; if that is the case, then obedience to a moral law because of its morality would be the same as obedience out of concern for the principal that makes it moral.

PHILLIP: That would be the case, if what you say holds true upon examination. To that end, then, let us reexamine those various principles people appeal to when determining the morality of something to determine what makes them make something moral.

XAVIER: That seems best; let us begin then with divine commands (both direct and mediated though nature). In the case of these, did we not determine that since God is altruistic the only reason that such a command would be given would be because obeying it would be to the benefit of those it was to – that is to say, it would encourage universal altruism?

PHILLIP: That is what we determined.

XAVIER: Divine commands, then, are predicated upon universal altruism. Let us look then at social contracts. We determined that there are both altruistic and egoistic reasons for establishing such a contract, but that in either case the contract was only valid insofar as it encouraged universal altruism.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: It, then, is also founded upon concern for universal altruism.

PHILLIP: We must then conclude that there is no moral motivation distinct from altruistic motivation.

The Thirteenth Dialogue

In which Xavier and Phillip examine whether seemingly Egoistic acts might be motivated by Altruism.

PHILLIP: Now that we have determined fully the desirability of altruism, I felt that we should address some remaining points pertaining to altruism as a concept.

XAVIER: That seems good. What, then, did you have in mind?

PHILLIP: To begin, it seems to me that altruism, as it is generally thought of, is a relatively abstruse subject with little bearing on day to day life.

XAVIER: Prima facie that does seem the case. What relevance, then, does that have to what we have said about it already?

PHILLIP: The point is that in our discussion thus far we have assumed a rather extreme conception of altruism which would only come into play in rather extreme circumstances; this, though, leaves out the great majority of human action, which seems entirely egoistic.

XAVIER: Perhaps you could clarify.

PHILLIP: What I mean is that altruism seems to be entirely irrelevant to the vast majority of everyday decisions, which would seem to make what we have said on the matter thus far of less import than we might have thought.

XAVIER: That does seem the case, if it is true that questions of altruism are for the most part irrelevant to most decisions; this, though, upon reflection, seems to me not to be the case. In order to see this, let us list acts which seem necessarily irrelevant to questions of altruism.

PHILLIP: Let us look first then at the rather mundane example of merely feeding oneself- this, it seems, is a paradigm case of an act that is wholly egoistic.

XAVIER: That it does, but it strikes me that it need not be such necessarily;

for is not feeding oneself necessary for survival?

PHILLIP: It is; that is precisely the point.

XAVIER: But how would one be able to act altruistically if one did not engage also in ensuring one's own survival? If one neglected to do this, then direct acts of altruism would be impossible.

PHILLIP: That is true, but I fail to see the relevance of it, for surely that is not the reason people engage in feeding themselves.

XAVIER: Doubtless, it probably never *the* reason, but that is not to say that it could not be *a* reason, for as we've seen already it is entirely possible that one can act out of both altruism and egoism at the same time.

PHILLIP: That is true; however, in the case of the present example it seems highly unlikely that when one decides to eat (in most cases) one does so with the benefit of others in mind at all.

XAVIER: That, though, is irrelevant to our present inquiry, which concerns whether such a seemingly egoistic act can in theory have an altruistic motivation and not whether or not such motivations are commonplace.

PHILLIP: In that case then, it seems that basic self-preservation can be altruistic. However, it still seems to me that there are things that people do that can have no altruistic motivation. For instance, if someone in pain takes medicine to feel better, that is something done entirely for the benefit of the agent.

XAVIER: That is not true necessarily, for while it is true that the agent benefits the most and the most directly from this act, others get benefit as well.

PHILLIP: How so?

XAVIER: First of all, if the person feels better then he is more likely to be more pleasant to those around him. Also, a person in high spirits is more likely to be altruistic in more direct ways; it is not beyond the realm of possibility that a person in a bad mood might feel very unfriendly and yet think that he ought to be altruistic and, as a result, take steps to make himself feel better so that he might better empathize with and help others.

PHILLIP: That is true.

XAVIER: Also, if there are other people who have a tendency to empathize with the person in our example, then it might very well be the case that he would make them feel better directly by taking steps to alleviate his suffering. Those other people would feel better knowing that he was no longer in pain.

PHILLIP: That also is true, but it seems a rather minor point, as that situation is likely rare.

XAVIER: That is not true at all, for, as we've seen already, it is the case that God has perfect empathy.

PHILLIP: That leads us though to the strange conclusion that *any* act is in theory motivated by altruism, even those that seem in direct conflict with altruism as we commonly conceive of it. It could be argued, for instance, that a person who murders indiscriminately because he enjoys doing so does so also out of altruism for God.

XAVIER: That does not follow, though, because the altruism that we are discussing is that which seeks the greatest benefit for the greatest number of people; it is irrelevant then to point out that there is some possible benefit to others for any action, as we are concerned here with those actions that seems egoistic and are also potentially motivated by universal altruism.

PHILLIP: That is true. It does mean

though that in a certain sense people are obligated to act in an egoistic manner if doing so will create greater overall benefit than otherwise.

XAVIER: That does not follow; it is not the case that it obligates one to act in an egoistic manner, but rather that one can be altruistically motivated to do something that seems egoistic because what benefits oneself and what benefits others is interconnected. Perhaps another example would help.

PHILLIP: I think it might.

XAVIER: Let us suppose that a person is tempted to eat a piece of cheesecake. As it happens, this person unhealthily overweight and is on a diet, but also greatly enjoys eating cheesecake. In this situation, it is the case that either action could be egoistically motivated and could also (for the reasons stated above) be altruistically motivated.

PHILLIP: That does seem the case.

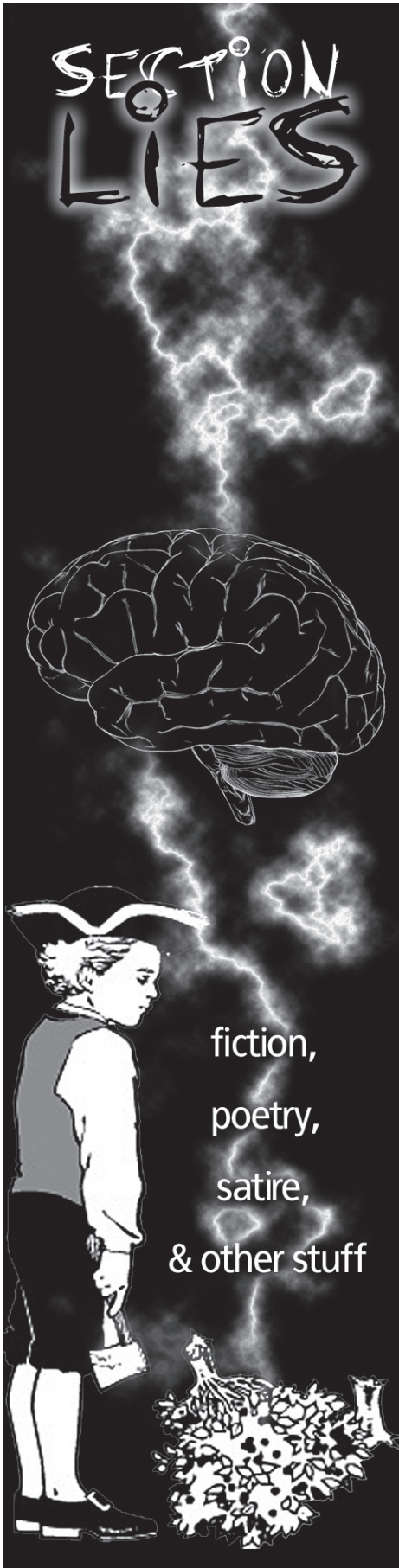
XAVIER: Let us further suppose that this person, after thinking the matter through, comes to the conclusion that, ultimately, abstaining from eating the cake would make her happier. It is now the case that although there would still be some benefit to others if she ate the cake, altruism ultimately compels her to abstain from doing so because that would confer greater benefit on others by benefiting her more.

PHILLIP: Then it seems the case that any action can be theoretically motivated by altruism just as any act can be theoretically motivated by egoism.

Almost Ideal will conclude
next issue with Section 4:

Calvin's Comeuppance
Stay tuned!





Chapter Six

Luckily, the sun was beginning to set when I began the journey to Petra's station. On the way, I kept to the alleys and side streets, where there were few people around. Most of the Tuelans had retired to their homes, anyway, but I knew I had to avoid Alliance sentries. A Tuelan walking about at night, his clothes drenched with blood, was bound to raise suspicion. However, being a native of Illur, I did have the advantage of knowing the city whereas the Alliance troops did not.

I stepped into her tent, my finger over my mouth. Her eyes opened wide and her mouth was agape. I saw her shiver once with fear, then she quickly recollected herself and tried her best to look fearless and intimidating.

"Petra, I can explain. I need your help," I pleaded, trying to assuage her fears. She jumped up from where she was sitting and threw the curtain shut. She then stood there in shock, staring at my bloodstained clothing.

"What on earth did you do, Tajere?"

"There was a man. He murdered a child."

"Murdered a child? Just now?"

"No, during the war. He murdered a mother and her child."

"During the war? I thought you were in Vondur during the war. Where did it happen?"

"I don't know. A Dwarven village in the east. I saw it happen before you found me. I can not explain that part. I thought I had imagined it, but then I saw him, I swear on Eleanor's grave." I stood there in silence, waiting for her to answer. Finally, I could wait no longer.

"For God's sake, help me!"

"Shhhhhh! Don't get hysterical. Things will be fine. Just don't scream. I will help you wash up. Just wait here

for a moment." She exited back out through the curtain, closing it behind her. I paced back and forth, waiting for her to return. It seemed like she had left for an eternity. *Where was she?* Someone could walk in any minute.

Finally, she returned. She put her finger over her mouth and opened the curtain, looking both ways before motioning me to follow.

"Where are we going?" I whispered, worried that we would be discovered.

"The washing station is at the other side of the encampment. Just be quiet and let me lead you. If you don't wake everyone up, no one will pay attention to us." I kept silent and followed her instructions, trying to ignore the fact that we stood out like a hideous wart on the face of an otherwise beautiful maiden. We swam through the trails of darkness, surrounded by a sea of foreboding lights emanating from torches within Alliance tents. We made it, though. Petra always was braver and smarter than I.

The washing station was a large wooden hut with a barrel and wringer for washing clothing and a large tub for bathing. There was also a water pump on the wall. We entered and she stood there, watching me. My palms began to build up with moisture and my arms began to twitch. Then thinking about my restlessness caused my stomach to cramp, making things even more uncomfortable. *How long was she going to stay in here?* Finally, I said something.

"Thank you, Petra. I am going to start washing up now."

"Then go ahead. I can't stay in here all night."

"You are staying?" I asked, fumbling over the words.

"Well, yes."

"In Tuela, it is not considered fitting for unmarried couples to see each other in such a manner," I said, which was more or less true.

"I don't really have a choice in the matter. I did not tell the camp leader I had brought a Tuelan stranger with blood all over his clothes in to bathe. I told him it was I that had to bathe, and I cannot very well bathe and stay in my tent at the same time. Besides, I will be able to stave off any other visitors, if you are so worried about it." I sighed.

"Can't you at least turn around?" She laughed.

"I am not a yearling babe. I have witnessed the male form before. Now hurry up. We've only a small amount of time." I glared at her, continuing to do nothing. She scoffed and turned herself around. I then began to take off my shirt, ever so slowly, still worried that she would for some reason turn around and see my unsightly frame. Then I unbuckled my boots and began to remove my pants. By this time, Petra had probably grown tired of my indolence and turned back around.

"Tajere, we must hurr—" Both of our faces froze in unison, with looks of terror impressed upon them. It was all there for her to see. My patchwork skin, a puerile blend of reds, blacks, and blues, sagging down from my body. The scars raked across my emaciated frame, my ribs jutting outward. My disgusting twisted feet, black, gnarled, and deformed. And of course, the crust infested hole between my legs, the ultimate humiliation of them all. I looked like something out a carnival, a grotesque freak of nature. I placed my hand over myself and crouched on the ground. Then, overwhelmed with disgrace, I began to weep, ashamed of myself. Petra then walked over to me and put her shaking hand upon my shoulder.

"Don't cry, Tajere. It wasn't your fault," she said to me as her hand traveled down my arm, her fingers dipping into the ridges of my skin, taking in the rough texture of my scarred flesh. The feeling of it brought tears to her tender eyes. Her compassion allayed my sadness and humiliation, giving me the courage to console her.

"It's all over now. You can't change the past, you can only try to change the future," I said, putting my arm around her. She smiled at me and I returned the smile.

I began taking my bath while Petra washed and wrung out my bloody attire. While we were together, I talked to her about something that had been plaguing my mind for a long time.

"Why do you speak Tuelan so well?"

"I grew up in the village of Eresta. I grew up alongside Tuelans from the village across the border. We often bartered and traded with one another. But that meant that our village was the first to be attacked by Tuelan troops. The people who were once our friends now began to slaughter us like cows." The corners of my eyes had begun to dampen and my hands were beginning to quiver

underneath the bathwater. I did not want to hear what I knew she was about to say, but I knew that I must.

"I barely escaped with my life. I still remember the early days, when I had to stay back with the other women and children, helpless and unable to fight back. We spent most of our time in flight, just trying to survive. I remember the endless marches through snow and mud. Some of the others weren't tough enough. They succumbed to frostbite, fatigue, starvation, illness. They were left behind, never to be seen again." It seemed she was in a trance, looking back on the events of the war with a detached horror.

"Despite this, however, I could still see animated giants, composed of rock, which towered above the highest mountains striking at our army; brutally crushing anyone whom was unfortunate enough to be in the way. Even back in our campsite, one could feel the earth shaking beneath them when they walked. There were similar denizens, created from the hardest, coldest ice, that blew vast gusts of frozen mist that encased anyone who came in contact with it in a thick layer of ice. Our armies became thinner with each successive battle and many years it looked as if we were doomed."

"So how did the Alliance finally win?"

"Well, there were many dark years. Kingdom after kingdom fell before Arxantes' horde of locusts, leaving only blackness and destruction in their wake. Even Thanatos, the master of life and death himself was merely Arxantes' slave."

"Thanatos himself! What gave this man such power?"

"He was a master magician. He claimed to receive power from a god he called Illur." *Illur. The Hiraꝥ Creed.* As I pondered her statement, she continued with her story. "Wherever he derived his powers from, they were formidable indeed. Arxantes had also lined up several allies. The ferocious Black Trolls and Goblins, and the winged dragons that glided through the air and rained fire and brimstone upon our armies. It was the most powerful army ever assembled in history and will probably remain forever so. The Empire had conquered almost all of Zimria, save one small island of Skyxia. He then diverted his force south for an assault on Nuneroz."

"The home of the Nine themselves?"

"Yes, though by this time they were eight. One of the Nine, Alenhre, arrived to face Arxantes and kill him, ending the war once and for all. But Arxantes slew him with ease."

"Slew a god!" I said, my mouth agape, "How could one conceive of such a thing?"

"Obviously, considering his sheer power, he thought of our force in Skyxia as insignificant, a trifling matter to be dealt with in good time. But luckily there was a young wizard in our company named Ontias," her voice then

raised as she beamed with pride, “The greatest magician who ever lived. And he was one of those Northern barbarians. Can you believe it? He was so skilled at magic he could turn clouds into meteors that crashed down upon the Empire’s forces. He was even able to dispel Arxantes’ giants. Arxantes had also foolishly left the Western shoreline weakly defended to prepare for his attack on Nuneroz. This enabled us to break forth and to make a long story short, that battle turned the war around and after a long campaign we were able to win.” After a pause, she continued to speak, this time in a more sorrowful tone.

“It looks like it was a hollow victory,” she said as she continued to scour my clothing, “Arxantes was convinced that he needed to cleanse the world. This meant that whenever his troops took over a city, they left no survivors behind. Everyone was executed immediately or taken to a camp where their limbs were harvested for the use of magical power.”

“Magical power? For what?”

“I do not know that. All I know is that the removal of limbs bestows great amounts of magical power upon the entity that is responsible for amputating it, if one knows how to harvest it, of course.” I grimaced at the thought.

“Then what about Ontias? If something so despicable is how one gains magical power, then how can one who uses magic be noble?”

“I did not say that removing limbs was the only way to use magic. I said it was one way to do so.”

“Then how did Ontias turn clouds into meteors?”

“He used an art called *teilma*. Before that, it had been customary for magicians to use runes in order to cast spells by inscribing symbols of power upon parchment. But Ontias discovered that through vast knowledge and intense concentration it was possible for a wizard to calculate the runic formulas within his mind and use those formulas to transform the properties of the natural matter around him.” I was mystified by such matters, being an uneducated fool who had tended fields and repaired shoes my entire life.

She was now finished with my clothing. It had been cleaned, but still had a red tinge that could not be washed out. A casual onlooker could never tell that it was blood, but it remained nevertheless to haunt me with the constant reminder of what I had done. Petra frowned.

“It looks like this is about how clean it will come out. Why did you have to do such a foolish thing, anyway?” she scolded. I blushed and tried to return to the subject at hand. She was more than happy to oblige me.

“Tell me more about this magic. I do not quite understand.”

“I know a little bit of magic. I could show you,” her voice beamed, though she tried to retain a trace of false modesty.

She took a deep breath and closed her eyes as she dipped her hand into the water. She was deep in thought now, in something akin to an alert slumber. I could feel a charge throughout the water now, rushing up against my skin. I shuddered. I was scared now. *What in the world was happening?* Then I looked down at Petra’s hand. A small amount of water was beginning to form into a stem, turning green. The stem’s growth continued, creeping upward, until a beautiful array of red petals exploded forth, throwing small drops of water all over the place. I cannot describe how filled with awe I was. I had never seen anything like this before. I grabbed the stem away from her, unknowingly digging my hand into its thorns. I screamed with pain and dropped the flower. Six drops of blood tumbled down into the bath water, splashing downwards and leaving behind a red mist. Petra gasped with horror.

“Oh Tajere, you shouldn’t have done that! Oh Tajere, I’m sorry! I didn’t mean for that to happen.” At this time, I put my hand over her mouth and placed my finger to my lips.

“Shhhh,” I whispered. We kept silent, listening for the footsteps of any Alliance sentries who may have heard us, but the darkness surrounding us remained intact, untainted by any of the Alliance’s lights. After a sufficient amount of time passed, I released my hand from her. It was then that I realized I had put my bleeding hand over her face.

“Oh dear, I’m sorry, Petra. I did not mean to do that,” I said as I tried to wash the blood off her face. She tried her best to put on a reassuring smile. I picked the flower back up, taking greater care this time and stroked the red petals. They still felt damp against my palm. I softly laughed as I looked again at my hand.

“All is well. I have been through much worse in my life, believe me. I just should not have grabbed it so fast. It is my fault. Do not worry yourself about it.” I held the flower up in front of my eye.

“I have never seen such a flower as this before. What is it called?”

“A rose.”

“A rose,” I repeated to myself with wonder, “It is a beautiful flower.” I then looked at her and smiled.

“A beautiful flower for a beautiful woman,” I said to her as I wove the stem of the rose through her fine green hair, taking care not to poke her with the thorny stem. I smiled at her, my teeth peering through. I then realized it and closed my lips back over them. She let out a small laugh and smiled in return. My lips reopened and we leaned towards each other and kissed, and at that moment all of my sorrows melted away.

Stay tuned for Chapter 7 next issue!



I Could Never Get the Hang of Thursdays:

A BI-WEEKLY COLUMN BY DOUGLAS ADAMS

by Rachel Rakov

When I thought about what I was going to write for this first column, I decided that I was going to start with a topic that was easy to write about, important enough for people to care about, and an issue on which I know many members of this community hold very close to their hearts. I am talking, of course, about England's refusal to enter the European Monetary Union.

As a reward for having come up with a column idea only a few days over its deadline, I decided to take a leisurely walk before I actually began the grueling process of writing the piece. This should not be overly surprising to anyone who knows me, or any other writer, in fact. Writers like to walk. It keeps us further away from our word processors.

Anyway, I was walking through the small park located not far from my flat, mentally patting myself on the back for coming up with my brilliant idea, when I saw something very unusual. A man was standing in the middle of the park, brushing his teeth.

Being the polite and easily flustered Englishman that I am, I tried very hard not to stare. However, after a few seconds, my not-staring at this man became so painfully obvious that I couldn't help but look at him again. It was incredible. He was just standing there, wearing an overcoat and jeans, brushing his teeth in the middle of the park. When he was finished, he rinsed his mouth with water from a bottle that sitting on the ground next to him, spat neatly onto the grass, and walked away, as if he had done absolutely nothing out of the ordinary. Which, in retrospect, I suppose he hadn't. Brushing one's teeth is perfectly ordinary activity, an activity that every human on Earth participates in, unless he or she has a passion for plaque and is eagerly awaiting gum disease. What made this scene so absurd was not the brushing of

the teeth itself, but rather, the way it was so public.

This led me to start thinking about the strange interactions between what people do publicly and what people do privately. For example: All people go to the toilet. It is a scientific fact of life. Yet, this is an activity that must be concealed through a series of doors and cute little euphemisms, such as "using the facilities" or "needing to powder one's nose". Or take an even better example: Sex. (Oh, look, I've piqued your interest.)

“All, people go to the toilet. It is a scientific fact.”

While it is slowly becoming acceptable in society these days to talk about sexual encounters frequently and publicly, it is still considered taboo to actually have sex relations anywhere but the privacy of one's bedroom. (Although, this too may be changing, if one is to believe what one sees on American television.) And here was this man, partaking in an activity which is never considered a public one, standing in the middle of a park in plain view of anyone who happened to see him. It was truly a remarkable sight.

I relayed this story to a friend of mine a little later in the day, when my walk had led me to a pub and I was enjoying a pint and a package of peanuts, who, upon hearing the anecdote, leaned over and told me the following.

"Douglas," he said, lowering his voice into a conspiratorial whisper, "Have you ever noticed that the human race has to be perpetually busy? I mean, think about it. Have you ever walked into a room and been the first person there? You can sit

for awhile doing nothing so long as you're alone, but as soon as another person walks in, you have to pretend to be doing something. Haven't you noticed that? If you were to just stare at the bloke who'd just walked in, or stare into space, even, he'd give you a wary glance and a wide berth. And so you pretend to busy yourself with your papers, or fiddle with your watch, or something, just to avoid any sort of awkwardness." He patted me on the back and gave a short nod, as if he had explained something important.

"Heh," I said, now thoroughly confused. I ordered another pint.

In conclusion, I really don't have much of a column for you today. Instead, I just have this strange anecdote, and the opinion of a pissed friend of mine, both of which I have been unable to get out of my head all day. These two ideas have completely taken over my brain, impeding my ability to think about anything that's actually important, such as my appointments for the day, where I put my car keys, and England's refusal to enter the European Monetary Union. So I'm afraid you'll have to go without my astounding argument about the latter, because I'm unable to remember it. All I can drudge up is that it seems bloody stupid of us not to. I hope that I'll do a significantly better job next week, providing that the moderators of this community allow me to keep my column.

This must be Thursday. I could never get the hang of Thursdays.

**Douglas Adams's spirit is channeled by Rachel Rakov. Any questions, comments, or bits of wire that have seemingly no use should be forwarded to her.*



A Month In Asia:

One student's Jan-term Experience

by: J S Hilliard

I spent the majority of the month of January traveling, as many Hampshire students often do. During this month I backpacked through the Far East, and can honestly say, it was the trip of a lifetime. I would encourage all of those thinking of traveling abroad to do so. Though frightening at times, the experience was well worth it.

My trip began when I flew out to Bangkok on December 29th. I brought little with me: a change of clothes, some cash, a knife, a pot, sleeping pad, etc. I wanted to travel light, as I knew I would be spending the majority of the time on my feet, carrying whatever I had with me. When I first stepped off of the plain in Bangkok, I was immediately struck by the heat – an oppressive, almost clawing thing that sunk into one's clothes and skin. Whatever I forget of Thailand, it certainly won't be the heat – that alone will stick in my memory for a long time to come.

I speak only a little Thai, and found it necessary to acquire the services of a guide for much of my stay in Thailand. Pravat, my guide, was a clever little fellow, jovial at all times, and a pleasure to travel with. The trip proper began when I started backpacking north. The countryside, often empty save the wilds and the creatures that inhabited it, was beautiful. The heat backed off in the hills, and the overall traveling became much more pleasurable. The food I ate, mostly what I could kill or forage, was hearty, but I could never seem to gather enough to be really full.

In the mountains near Peking, I came across a number of monks, and perhaps the most incredible part of that month in Asia. The monks were silent save their humming together, walking the path in single file with their heads bowed to the dusty track. I moved to the side of the path and let the group pass. They did not seem to acknowledge my presence, the presence of a Westerner in their land; they certainly didn't look up from their travels, at least until the creature appeared.

I'm not much of a believer in myths or such. Dragons? Dragons are a creature we created to scare our children. But the thing I saw that day... the closest thing it can be described to is a dragon. It was large – at least fifteen, maybe twenty feet long – and its serpentine body was supported by four thick legs that were tipped with sets of claws. The monks – well, they weren't really monks I guess, or they were some kind of order of monks I had never heard of.

The creature, the dragon, came crashing out of the trees on the far side of the path. The monks acted quickly – but not quickly enough, for the creature snapped its impressive set of jaws around one of the men. He died, and I can only hope it

was quickly, watching what the beast did to him, thrashing him about and then sending him sailing across the path into the trees. The others spread out in a semi-circle around the beast, their empty hands now full of steel. As the beast lunged at them, one man would jab his spear forward, then quickly back off, while another would do the same across the semi-circle. After a bit, their jabs, seemingly small and insufficient to harm a creature of such large size, seemed to be wearing it down. Blood stained its torso and face. The creature, clearly suffering in pain, became more angered and lashed out at the monks.

Without warning, the creature leaped forward nearly 25 feet or so, instantly crushing one of the monks under it. The others responded quickly, backing off when the creature lunged at them, but stabbing it the entire time. I had backed off the path, and was crouched behind a cluster of rocks near the trees.

Whether it was simply curiosity or some sixth sense, my desire to glance to my left saved my life. A shambling zombie was headed my way! Apparently the creature's bite had the ability to raise the dead! The first man the dragon had pounced upon and tossed aside had arisen – and though his guts were spilled out, trailing across the ground and his left arm gone (in the beast's belly I imagine) he walked on, moaning something and staring at me with lifeless eyes. I grabbed a nearby branch, and was able to beat the creature down and finally crush its head, which proved to kill it.

In the meantime, the monks had managed to kill the beast. I had missed the climax of the battle, but I had survived it, so it's a fair trade I imagine. Once the beast was dead, the monks dropped their weapons and began chanting. Some kind of flying disc suddenly appeared in the sky, and in a blinding cone of light fell upon the creature. It was pulled up by some mysterious force until it was swallowed by the craft. The monks continued to chant, and to my surprise their eyes began to glow. It seems as if lightning leapt from their eyes to the disc, which vaporized in the air, leaving behind a smell like burnt tin foil.

As peacefully as they had appeared, the monks hid their weapons, continued their humming, and walked on. I sat on the edge of the path and watched them go. Readers – you might find this hard to believe, and I understand that. I could hardly believe it myself, though I lived through it. I debated whether or not I even wanted to print this, but I figured a story such as this must be told. This is my way of coping with what happened. I only hope that everyone else's January term experiences were as exciting and interesting as mine.



